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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

SEPTEMBER 1st, 1856.

TRUTH ABOUT MUSIC & MUSICIANS.

LETTER I.—HAYDN.

Translated from the German by SABILLA NOVELLO.

I PROPOSE to lay before you a series of sketches of the most prominent composers, and endeavour in the descriptions, which shall be simple and practical, to elucidate *what* each master contributed towards the progress of art; *why* he thus contributed it; and how his progressive course was accomplished. I take for granted that you possess a knowledge of the works of these masters, with the general opinion entertained of them. From this small collection of portraits, I trust you may gain a clear and correct idea of the originals, as well as of musical art in general, so that you yourself may form an assured judgment on both; and at length may easily decide, if and when Art progressed, remained stationary, retrograded, or went astray and deteriorated. I shall begin with

JOSEPH HAYDN, he being the creator and founder of our modern instrumental music. Joseph Haydn, the eldest of twenty children, was born 31st March, 1732, in the village of Robrau (Lower Austria), and became, at an early age, choir boy in Vienna. On losing his treble voice, he was dismissed from his choir, and for a long time was obliged to gain a scanty subsistence by giving lessons. Very soon, and very unmistakeably, the desire and aptitude for composition awakened within him, but he never had a regular instructor. What he became, he became by self-tuition alone. He purchased himself the "*Gradus ad Parnassum*," by Fux,—procured several musical works of the day, those of the Hamburger Bach,—and commenced studying, practising, and composing.

In what state was art when he devoted himself to it?—What did he find existing?—are the questions which we naturally ask, when wishing to trace the progressive course of any musician, to discover his merits, and honor his memory. J. S. Bach and his sons, Gluck, and Handel, were the greatest masters of that period.

Purely instrumental music scarcely existed; the best of this kind which preceded Haydn's, were the so-called symphonies before operas, similar in form to our present overtures; the organ compositions by Bach; toccatas and fugues, the *Suites* for orchestra, by J. Seb. and Phil. Emmanuel Bach; and the germ of harpsichord sonatas, which Kühnau began in 1700. Operas and oratorios were already in a more forward state. In all these works, however, psalmody style pre-

vailed, and it was difficult to perceive much difference between the opera air, a church song, and a sonata theme. Haydn at first composed small pieces for few instruments, which were performed in the streets at evening time. Then he was struck by the idea of composing a bow-instrument quartett for a certain Count. *From this bow-instrument quartett sprung up our modern instrumental music.* Haydn has done for music, what Goethe and Schiller did for literature. Although he wore a wig and pigtail, yet he possessed greater reformatory boldness and greater power of genius than all our newer composers put together. How great his merit was can scarcely be measured; but if the greatest genius be that which, in any science, takes the longest stride forward, then is Haydn the greatest musical genius; for no one, either before or since his time, has caused such progress in musical art—not even Mozart or Beethoven. He gave to it clearer, more agreeable and comprehensible forms; greatly increased its expression and truth; and laid the foundation of our modern instrumentation. Much has been written about him,—partly true, but mostly imaginary hyperbole: this last is easy, but it is difficult, very difficult, to perceive and explain what each master has accomplished, and how he was enabled to accomplish his mission. The *Augsburgh Allgemeine Zeitung* lately says: "Legions of Philosophic categories would not suffice to complete a History of Music." This is in speaking of Brendel's so-called "History of Music,"—but a "History of the Art," that is, experience, properly interrogated, is the best and most unfailing teacher of Art-laws. As I have elsewhere observed, no genius can exist without clear and correct reflection; all assertions of "immediate revelation" in art, are the unmeaning phrases of such as have had no personal experience of artistic life. Every successful *deed* has been preceded by strong *desire* and cultivated *powers*, as the best means of performance. For this reason, it is not only the genius of great masters—given them by nature—which we ought to admire, but rather that which they gave to themselves,—that which they attained by industry and reflection.

Talent alone does not make a composer, but the proper use of talent, which is only effected by long study, consideration, proof, and practice. Goethe says, speaking of a ballad: "I long carried it about with me before I wrote it down; it contains *years of rumination*, and I essayed it in three or four manners, before I decided upon the form it now wears." Thus spoke and worked Goethe; thus act all men of real genius; and thus acted Haydn. Zealous and continued practice gave him great facility in contrapuntal science, especially in fugue; this facility he first employed in composing his quartetts; these are, in consequence, dry, and in fact, merely freely-

treated fugues, in the character and form then fashionable. If we study them chronologically from the commencement, we shall clearly perceive the formation of his style; in them we may behold what he observed in his own and his contemporaries' works,—what he found wanting in them,—and what he invented as means for improvement. This, then, and no other, is the right course for self-cultivation. Haydn acknowledged that "repetition of idea" was an unavoidable necessity in music, it being the only means of shaping a musical composition—a succession of rapidly-produced and ceasing tones—into a consistent form or whole; but he also observed, that this necessary repetition was mostly made in precisely the same manner, and thus wearied and annoyed, instead of increasing enjoyment. This failing in the music of his time, he endeavoured to remedy thus: He repeated an idea, but with the addition of something new on every recurrence, so that it appeared on each occasion under a novel aspect, with different light or shade, and assumed an altered tone-color. This *first* great principle which he founded, and developed more and more, gave him his wonderful ability of creating, from a few bars, a large, interesting, and vivid work, which should combine strictest unity with extraordinary variety. This, his *great discovery* of thematic treatment, has had the most decided influence upon musical art, as all succeeding great masters and worthy composers acknowledged it as a fundamental requisite of instrumental music, and adopted it in their creations.

None of his successors, however, have excelled him on this point. Mozart and Beethoven equalled him, certainly; they employed thematic development in other manners, and produced, through its power, manifold glorious effects; but even they have never surpassed Haydn. No *modern* composer—not even Mendelssohn—has even approached him in the science of *varying an idea*: some of the new and newest writers, judging by their works, do not seem conscious that such a science exists. None of the masters (not even Beethoven) who succeeded Haydn, added so much as he did to this branch of art. They may have had more diversified ideas, but these were all worked out on Haydn's principle. The *second* failing which Haydn discovered in the music of his time, was the meagreness and dryness of instrumentation. He felt what charm of sound might lie in the tones of different instruments, and how many new and beautiful effects might be obtained by different employment or new combination of these. He therefore formed his second great principle, by universal beauty of sound, and by all possible employment, or union of instruments to obtain new melodious effects.

If we examine his works, and compare them,

in this respect, with those of his predecessors, we shall find that he made extraordinary progress, although he was surpassed by Mozart and Beethoven, who brought original and harmonious instrumentation to a degree of perfection, unimagined until their time. Haydn perceived a third failing of then existing music to be the usually entire absence of a defined expression, or any decided sentiment; the musical works at that period being mostly cold, scientific compilations of notes, devoid of all feeling or passion. He therefore founded his third principle: to render the language of musical sound, clearer, warmer, more determined and comprehensible. This he did by breathing life and spirit into his themes, giving to them a distinct expression, retained throughout. He then consulted his own heart, and endeavoured to express in tones the feelings which moved within him. The result was, that his works contain sometimes a child-like gaiety, or fanciful humour; and at other times, ardent passion, or pathetic tenderness.

But this did not suffice: he was convinced that a composer should always undertake the description of some determined subject, in order to increase his invention and expression; and upon one occasion he freely owns that he set himself the task of expressing in an Adagio, "A conversation between God and a penitent sinner." It is true that he was not the first who endeavoured to describe in music a given subject. Seb. Bach had already furnished programmatic titles to some of his instrumental compositions, such as—"Departure of a Friend," &c. Still earlier, Kùlman had published in Leipzig, "Bible Stories, in the form of Sonatas." The second of these is intimated to be "Saul cured by David, through means of music:" the sonata represents, 1st, Saul's despondency and madness; 2ndly, David's delectable harp-playing; and, 3rdly, the King's restored peace of mind;—a subject better fitted for music could certainly scarcely be selected.

At a later epoch, the Sonata, as it was called, consisted of three movements, in which the composer or executant could distinguish himself in solemn and grandiose, soft and flowing, and light and playful style. The first part was marked *maestoso* and *allegro*; the second, *andante* and *larghetto*; and the third, *minuetto*.

At a still later epoch,—that of Emmanuel Bach,—a fourth part was added, the *rondo*. But although Emmanuel Bach was the originator of the pianoforte sonata, yet Haydn improved it, and created from this source the *quartett* and *symphony* of the present time. His principal merit is, that he not only developed this form of composition, but, by his thematic treatment, rendered it interesting,—invented entirely novel and manifold ornamental matter,—and broke through the trammels of stereotype flourishes. This he only accomplished by his unusually fertile imagination

and creative power, which we are scarcely able fully to appreciate, as we are in possession of all the experience which he gained, and cannot carry ourselves back to the time when such knowledge did not even exist.

Haydn has done more for the Art by *new discoveries*, than any other musician, before or since his day. In order to be convinced of this, we need only compare his works with those of any of his predecessors or successors. The fourth failing which he observed in then existing music, was the stereotype meagre *Form* of musical pieces: he knew, it is true, that music requires certain conventional forms, as, like everything else, it is recognisable and comprehensible by its form alone; but his shrewd judgment, and fine sentiment, persuaded him that conventionalism weighed too heavily, and that life and spirit were crushed beneath the pressure; he desired to inspire music with fresh life, and the stiffness of the stereotype forms then used, prevented his free action; therefore, he wrestled stoutly against form, and his efforts at length prevailed; he succeeded in assimilating form to psychological exigencies, or phases of sentiment, and thus gave it more nature and greater variety. This is his fourth merit.

These four principal and fundamental rules, upon which Haydn composed his works, and which were elicited by his clear and active judgment in Art and Life, prove, in addition to his excitable imagination and powerful creative faculty, the *musical genius* of Haydn, which, however, would never have shone so brilliantly in our horizon, had he been wanting in active industry, or had he not wisely devoted himself exclusively to his art.

The above is equally applicable to the successors of Haydn, whose career we shall rehearse. We shall find that all those who exercised beneficial influence on Art, succeeded by the same means used by Haydn. If you have read any of the exaggerated and æsthetical descriptions of Haydn's physical and mental qualities, you may consider my remarks somewhat prosaic; but Art is never advanced by philosophic-mystic verbosity or phantasies. Those who would truly understand a great master, and zealously imitate him, must watch him at his writing-table, and penetrate into the secret laboratory of his productions.

Haydn's music is modern music—that is, the expression of some feeling which the composer's own soul has experienced, or which he gathers from some foreign source; this expression is given with *truth*—that is, according to Nature and reality; with *grace*—that is, harmoniously throughout, in a form clear in detail and unencumbered in combination. This modern music, written on Haydn's principles, is the only true and worthy music; and those who would twist it to any other purpose, will find themselves at fault,

and soon be convinced of their error. The character of Haydn's music is generally cheerful; but the old composer did not want capability either in feeling or expressing serious emotions, as his various works prove. He could give way to ardent passion, lose himself in sweet dreamings, sink into pathos, and even be oppressed by spiritual shadows; but his favorite mood is playful and joyous, even to excess of humour; and no composer has yet appeared, who, on the whole, possessed so lively a vein, and beneficently employed Art for its fittest purpose,—that of affording entertainment and pleasure to man, and causing him to forget present care and sorrow. Other good composers have been influenced by different emotions, and have therefore expressed different musical thoughts; but *all have used the form and principal rules inculcated by Haydn*, until—but I will not forestall my future letters.

(To be continued.)

HECTOR BERLIOZ ON MODERN INSTRUMENTATION.*

(From "*The Manchester Examiner and Times*.")

THE lady who is announced as the translator of this admirable treatise, has, on a previous occasion, shown a loyal devotion to genius, by her extraordinary work, the "*Concordance to Shakspeare*," which, for completeness and a thorough fulfilment of all that it was intended it should realise, has rarely, if ever, been equalled. Mrs. Cowden Clarke, in applying herself to the task of making known to English readers this treatise, by Hector Berlioz, is again showing her respect for what is genuine, and her desire to render service not only to the teacher, but to those who desire to be taught.

Berlioz is a true genius, and he possesses the daring of genius—a characteristic which, no doubt, has been the means of interfering with a more general acceptance of his noble compositions in this country.

This volume on instrumentation can scarcely fail to raise, in the estimation of all thoughtful musicians, the intellectual character of its author. He presents, in a simple and peculiarly lucid manner, a reason for the faith that is in him; and he contrives to render interesting what has too long been a mere wandering in the dark. Musical progress has been exceedingly slow both here and elsewhere; we have been satisfied with the mere form, and have not apparently understood that the artist makes use of colour as well as design. The most touching of melodies may yet be heightened in its pathos or its passion, by giving to it a deeper, a warmer tone, through the language of harmony,—a fact made self-evident by a studious perusal of the many graceful examples here selected from the works of Gluck, Beethoven, and others. Gluck is so little known in this country, that we should be gratified with the present publication, if it were for no other reason than the introduction of several passages from that great

* *A Treatise upon Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration; containing an Exact Table of the Compass, a Detail of the Mechanism, and a Study of the Quality of Tone, and Expressive Character of Various Instruments; accompanied by Numerous Examples in Score, from the Works of the Greatest Masters, and from some Unpublished Works of the Author. New Edition, revised, corrected, augmented by several additional (copyright) chapters on Newly Invented Instruments, and on the whole Art of the Orchestral Conductor.* Op. 10. Translated from the French by Mary Cowden Clarke. Published in Novello's Library for the diffusion of Musical Knowledge. Theoretical Series, No. VII. Price 12s., bound.